

SHAKESPEARE'S ESSAYS

Sampling Montaigne from
Hamlet to *The Tempest*



Peter G. Platt

Shakespeare's Essays

*For my mother,
Gee Gee Platt (aka Gram)*

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The Tempest*

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Texts and Titles

I adopt Will Hamlin's spelling protocols in his *Montaigne's English Journey* for the texts of Montaigne: *Essayes* for references to Florio's translation, *Essais* for references to French editions, and *Essays* for general references to the book.

Introduction: 'Were my mind settled, I would not essay but resolve myself'

Why do critics and audiences feel that there is something 'different' about the plays that Shakespeare wrote after 1603? Scholars have for years focused on Shakespeare's later works as 'Jacobean' because of James I's accession to the throne in 1603. The plays – in the darkness of their comedy and in the general pessimism of the largely tragic period that followed – have been seen to mirror the despair and unease of an England that had lost its queen and had been plunged into the uncertainty that is inevitably part of a transition in power. More recently it has been argued that other crucial factors coincided with the change in regime. Shakespeare's interest in judicial rhetoric, the personnel changes in his own acting company, and his performances at court – all these helped shape such diverse and troubling plays as *Measure for Measure*, *King Lear*, and *The Tempest*.¹

But 1603 was also the year in which John Florio published his widely read translation of Montaigne's essays, which Shakespeare undoubtedly knew and used as he constructed phrases, speeches, and perhaps the thematic universe of whole plays.²

In this book I contend that Shakespeare's reading of Montaigne is an under-recognised driving force in the development of his later work, from the choice of specific words to the employment of whole patterns of thought. Montaigne and Shakespeare share similar approaches to ideas of knowing, being, and aesthetic form, what John O'Brien has called 'an esthetics of *non finito* and an ontology of incompleteness'.³ Theirs is a world of doubt, contingency, uncertainty, and mutability – in which receptivity to new ideas and new, more 'open' methods of literary composition feature strongly. Both authors dedicate themselves to exploring instabilities of self, knowledge, and form in disjunctive ways that stress interruption, fracture, and unexpected alternatives to conventional wisdom.

This quest to probe the instabilities of self, knowing, and world takes, for both writers, the form of 'essays'. Although writing in a different genre, Shakespeare *essays* the *Essais*. For as a contemporary dictionary – Randall Cotgrave's *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (1611) – tells us, 'essayer' could mean 'To essay; try, proue, tast, attempt; take a tast, make a tryall of; to feele before hand.'⁴ So, while Montaigne's essays created a major literary genre and gave a name to intellectual questing in prose form, Shakespeare's own 'essays' – his trials of ideas, forms, and even specific words on a Montaignian model – have gone relatively unremarked. This book will not reveal a prose Shakespeare, but it will show how, after reading Montaigne, as translated by Florio in 1603, Shakespeare made the tentative, provisional, sceptical essaying of ideas an integral part of his plays. 'Shakespeare's essays' are both prose and poetry. On the one hand, they are the edition of Florio that he knew so well, and on the other hand, they are the plays that he wrote exploring concepts and approaches that Montaigne had singled out for attention.

In arguing for a Montaignian Shakespeare, I am not dismissing the extensive work done on the Jacobean context of the later plays, and I am not introducing the topic for the first time. But I believe that we need to take more seriously the words of Friedrich Nietzsche, who in 1876 called Shakespeare Montaigne's 'best reader'.⁵ By reading Montaigne and Florio as Shakespeare must have, with an eye keen for vivid details and telling phrases, and a mind attuned to challenging ideas and gnawing doubts, we can become better readers ourselves. Shakespeare's Montaigne is not always easy to grasp, but he is almost always 'there'. Once we begin to catch on to the characteristics of his subtle, shifting form, we meet him repeatedly in Shakespeare's later plays.⁶

Florio's translation of Montaigne made a substantial impression when it was first published, as I will show in a moment. But surprisingly no one connected Montaigne explicitly to Shakespeare for more than a century and a half. Indeed, it was not until 1780 that a Shakespeare scholar noticed, at least in print, that Shakespeare had read Montaigne at all.⁷ In that year Edward Capell's *Notes and Various Readings to Shakespeare* noted the now-famous verbal echoes of Montaigne's 'Of the Caniballes' (1.31, 1.30 in Florio) in Gonzalo's speech about a pastoral utopia in *The Tempest*. Thus began a debate over Shakespeare's 'debt to Montaigne' that has waxed and waned over the centuries.⁸ Because that debt might be seen to question Shakespeare's own creativity, it has at times echoed the authorship debate in its intensity.

The existence of the debate is remarkable in itself, since Shakespeare's contemporaries in the dramatic and literary worlds of early modern

England would not have found it at all strange to think of Shakespeare as a reader of Montaigne, since they were often his readers as well. If early modern publishers can be counted as the earliest audiences for the books they ushered into the world, then Edward Blount may have been among the first to make the Montaigne–Shakespeare connection: he published both the Florio Montaigne in 1603 and the Shakespeare First Folio in 1623.⁹

More certainly, in an important poem at the beginning of Volume I of Florio’s translation, Florio’s brother-in-law and poet extraordinaire Samuel Daniel revealed himself a perceptive reader of Montaigne’s ideas on custom, praising ‘*Prince Montaigne (if he be not more)*’ for, among other reasons, having

*made such bolde sallies out upon
Custome, the mightie tyrant of the earth,
In whose Seraglio of subjection
We all seeme bred-up, from our tender birth.*¹⁰

What Daniel shows us is that Florio / Montaigne is challenging his audience in provocative ways, asking them to consider why they think and act as they do.

The playwright John Marston made ample use of Florio’s translation, especially in his *The Dutch Courtesan* (1605), as did John Webster in *The White Devil* (1611–12).¹¹ In Ben Jonson’s *Volpone* (1607), Lady Politic Would-Be suggests that the English routinely used Montaigne’s essays for their own writing.¹² Discussing the Italian writer Giambattista Guarini (1538–1612) and especially his *Il pastor fido*, Lady Politic explains that

All our English writers,
I meane such, as are happy in the Italian,
Will deigne to steal out of this Author, mainely;
Almost as much, as from Montagnie. (3.4)

Jonson’s character says what everyone seems to have known – that Montaigne was the first choice for prospective stealers and borrowers.

Yet it was not until 1780 and Capell’s note that anyone noticed that Shakespeare had ‘deigne[d] to steal out of . . . Montagnie’. Capell’s observation of the similarities between Gonzalo’s discussion of an ideal commonwealth in 2.1 of *The Tempest* and a passage from Montaigne’s ‘Of the Caniballes’ deserves quoting in full:

This speech, and one that comes after it, prove the writer’s acquaintance with one he has not been trac’d in by any, annotator or editor; for thus old Montaigne, speaking of the Indian discovery and of the new people’s

manners: 'C'est une Nation, diray-je a Platon, en laquelle il n'y a a aucune esperance de trafiq, nulle cognoissance de Lettres, nulle science de nombres, nul nom de magistrat, ny de superiorité politique, nul usage de service, de richesse, ou de pauvreté, nulls contracts, nulls successions, nulls partages, nulls occupations qu'oysives, nul respect de parenté que commun, nulls vestments, nulle agriculture, nul metal, nul usage de vin ou de bled. Les paroles mesmes, qui signifient le mensonge, la trahison, la dissimulation, l'avarice, l'envie, la detraction, le pardon, inouyes.' – *Essais de Montaigne*, vol. i, p. 270, Bruxelles, 1659. The person who shall compare this passage with the translations of it that were extant in Shakespeare's time will see reason to think he read it in French.¹³

'Old Montaigne' – but, explicitly, not John Florio – and Shakespeare were linked for the first time.¹⁴ Ten years later, Edmund Malone – in a rather harsh take-down of Capell – was the first to link Shakespeare and *Florio's* Montaigne:

Our author has here closely followed a passage in Montaigne's ESSAIES, translated by John Florio, folio, 1603: 'It is a nation, (would I answer Plato,) that hath *no kind of trafficke, no knowledge of letters*. . . . The very words that import lying, falsehood, *treason*, dissimulations, covetousness, envie, detraction and pardon, were never heard amongst them.' The passage was pointed out by Mr. Capell, who knew so little of his author as to suppose that Shakspeare [sic] had the original French before him, though he has almost literally followed Florio's translation.¹⁵

So Shakespeare and Montaigne are linked in 1780, Shakespeare and Florio in 1790.

In the *Essays*, the crucial passage comes as Montaigne – speaking of Brazilian Indians near Rio de Janeiro, where Nicolas Durand de Villegagnon had established a colony by 1555 – wrote, in Florio's translation,

It is a nation, would I answer *Plato*, that hath no kind of traffic, no knowledge of letters, no intelligence of numbers, no name of magistrate, nor of politic superiority; no use of service, of riches, or of poverty; no contracts, no successions, no viduities, no occupation but idle; no respect of kindred, but common; no apparel but natural; no manuring of lands, no use of wine, corn, or metal.¹⁶

When Shakespeare's Gonzalo discusses his model commonwealth with the remnants of the Neapolitan court, he steals from 'Montaigne':

Had I plantation of this isle my lord . . . ,
I' the commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things. For no kind of traffic

Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
 Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
 And use of service, none; contract, succession,
 Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
 No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
 No occupation; all men idle, all;
 And women too – but innocent and pure;
 No sovereignty . . .
 All things in common nature should produce
 Without sweat or endeavor. Treason, felony,
 Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine,
 Would I not have; but nature should bring forth,
 Of it own kind all foison, all abundance,
 To feed my innocent people. (2.1.142; 147–56, 159–64)

I will return to the exact language of – and the variety of perspectives on the ‘cannibals’ in – the two texts when I discuss *The Tempest* in Chapter 5. But this is obviously a crucial moment in the Montaigne–Shakespeare nexus, and most scholars have shared Robert Ellrodt’s conclusion about the relationship between the two passages: ‘certainty is afforded by the recurrence of such phrases as “no kinde of traffike”, “no name of magistrate”, etc.’¹⁷

Following on from Capell, the nineteenth century saw the beginning of a debate about the extent of Shakespeare’s debt to Montaigne, and the origins of this discussion are quite compelling because they reveal readers going beyond verbal echoes and thinking about literary and philosophical connections between the two writers. In 1838, Sir Frederic Madden claimed that the now-infamous copy of the 1603 *Essayes*, bearing Shakespeare’s autograph, was authentic and confirmed that ‘this book was consulted by Shakspeare [sic] in the composition of his plays’.¹⁸ In the same year, John Sterling not only concurred with the notion that Montaigne influenced Shakespeare but also claimed that ‘The Prince of Denmark is very nearly a Montaigne.’¹⁹ As Jean-François Chappuit notes, by this time, ‘La polémique à propos de l’influence possible de Montaigne sur Shakespeare était lancée.’²⁰

If Capell’s note is the foundational moment, and ‘the polemic was launched’ in 1838, it was not long afterward that the debate began to pick up steam.²¹ In 1846, the French scholar Philarète Chasles claimed that ‘once on the track of the studies and tastes of Shakespeare, we find Montaigne at every corner, in *Hamlet*, in *Othello*, in *Coriolanus*’.²² German scholars of the nineteenth century pushed the connection into the polemical,²³ and one of them, Jacob Feis, notably claimed that Hamlet not only was, as Sterling had it in 1838, ‘a Montaigne’ but was an

embodied refutation of Montaigne's philosophy, which 'preached the rights of nature whilst yet clinging to dogmatic tenets . . . from the narrow cells of a superstitious Christianity'.²⁴

Major works without such a strong agenda appeared in 1902 and 1909, by Elizabeth R. Hooker and J. M. Robertson respectively.²⁵ Hooker performed an exhaustive exploration of links between Shakespeare and both Montaigne's ideas and Florio's language, while Robertson made the case that the *Essays* helped both to provide Shakespeare's 'culture-evolution' and to form his 'mental history'.²⁶ Shakespeare drew on Montaigne for *Hamlet*, left him behind for a while, and then, 'after his period of pessimism[,] view[ed] life in a spirit which could be expressed in terms of Montaigne's philosophy'.²⁷ Robertson famously concluded that Shakespeare's debt to Montaigne ultimately was so great that it altered his own sense of Shakespeare's originality: Shakespeare is 'differentiated from other men not by his inventive and strictly "creative" faculty, but by his unparalleled plasticity and receptivity and responsiveness'.²⁸ For Robertson, then, Shakespeare essayed – and assayed – the *Essays* for his best ideas.

Dissent came very quickly. As early as 1904 – following the first edition of Robertson's book and Hooker's long article – J. Churlton Collins almost entirely dismissed the connection: 'It may be said at once that of all the parallel passages adduced there is not one, except that from *The Tempest*, which may not resolve itself into mere coincidence.'²⁹ The great Montaigne scholar Pierre Villey was even more certain of the lack of evidence, and weighed in with a famous claim: 'Cents zéros additionnées ensemble ne font toujours que zéro.'³⁰ In Villey's view, a hundred zeroes still add up to zero.

Then, in 1925, George Coffin Taylor launched a counterattack. *Shakespeare's Debt to Montaigne* is still the most valuable book in presenting parallels between Shakespeare and Florio's Montaigne. It notes overlaps in 'vocabulary, phrases, short and long passages, and, after a fashion . . . also in thought'.³¹ Taylor divides the key passages into three groups:

First, that . . . group of passages in the Florio Montaigne and in the plays of Shakspeare written during 1603 and after, so similar in phraseology as practically to preclude all possibility of doubt. Second, another group of passages and phrases in the Florio Montaigne and in Shakespeare's plays written during and after 1603, which, though not so strikingly similar in phraseology as to preclude all doubt, are yet similar enough to make one feel that the Shakspeare passage could not have taken on its final form unless Shakspeare had made the acquaintance of the Montaigne passage. Third, a list of approximately seven hundred and fifty words and phrases from the Florio Montaigne used also by

Shakspere, but never in any composition of his antedating 1603 – many of them, if one may judge from the Oxford Dictionary, never used by anyone before 1603.³²

In an early review of Taylor's book, T. S. Eliot was particularly impressed by the third list, consisting of 'words and phrases numerous enough to create a presumption that Shakespeare picked them up from Florio'.³³ Eliot also praised Taylor for focusing on parallel words rather than on thoughts:

And in bringing more clearly to light this verbal influence Mr. Taylor supplies a corrective in the invariable human impulse to look for mystery and excitement. For certainly it was not the influence of one philosopher on another. . . . Montaigne is just the sort of writer to provide a stimulant to a poet; for what the poet looks for in his reading is not a philosophy – not a doctrine or even a consistent point of view which he endeavours to *understand* – but a point of departure. The attitude of a craftsman like Shakespeare – whose business was to write plays, not to think – is very different from that of the philosopher or even the literary critic.

Not that Montaigne did not influence Shakespeare in ways which we can never know. Mr. Taylor does not deny the existence of some deeper influence than an influence of vocabulary. But he refrains – and for this abstention must be given all praise – from attempting to plumb these depths.³⁴

For Eliot, in essaying Montaigne, Shakespeare found a 'stimulant' for his poetry and maybe 'some deeper influence'. For its important collection of verbal echoes – and tantalising hints at intellectual parallels – Taylor's book is the one that must be confronted by all who wish to deny the Montaigne–Florio connection to Shakespeare.

And there have been potent rebuttals. In an essay as painstaking in its collection of data as was Taylor's book, Alice Harmon asked in 1942, 'How Great was Shakespeare's Debt to Montaigne?'³⁵ Harmon documents classical sources for all of the major parallels outlined by Taylor and others, and sees classical commonplaces – rather than shared ideas and language – as the link: 'Certainly, Shakespeare could have had from the popular commonplaces from the classics the type of material which he shares with Montaigne – in many instances indeed he could have found there the specific sentences and similitudes which occur with similar wording in Florio and the plays.'³⁶ Harmon misses the forest for the trees here, in addition to missing the occasions when Shakespeare and Montaigne (via Florio) depart from the very commonplaces she so assiduously lines up.³⁷

Margaret Hodgen was less dogmatic in her 1952 essay, 'Montaigne and Shakespeare Again', which attempted to show that the ideas in both Montaigne's 'Of the Caniballes' and Shakespeare's *The Tempest* – the ground

zero of the Montaigne–Shakespeare connection – were available in the ‘anthropological’ texts of the period.³⁸ She argues that ‘this very ancient model was the one chosen by both men, not alone, as some have thought, because it embodied the ideas of the Golden Age and the Noble Savage, but because, with the use of these philosophical, moral, and historical ingredients, it included others of an equally ancient ethnological character’.³⁹ That said, she grudgingly recognised that ‘it seems not unlikely that some indebtedness may have existed. . . . [T]he lines in *The Tempest* are still more like those in *Of the Caniballes* than any other formulation.’⁴⁰

* * *

I will show in the pages that follow that the Montaigne–Shakespeare connection has roots that are deeper than – or at least different from – those of classical commonplaces (whether rhetorical, literary, or anthropological/ethnographic). It adds up to much more than Villey’s ‘zéros’.⁴¹ This book builds on recent scholarship that has once again found the evidence for Montaigne’s effect on Shakespeare to be too compelling to ignore. Arthur Kirsch has perceptively noted the links between Shakespeare’s intellectual interests in *The Tempest* and ‘Montaigne’s thinking’ as follows: ‘inclusive; interrogative rather than programmatic; anti-sentimental but humane; tragicomic rather than only tragic or comic; incorporating adversities rather than italicizing them as subversive ironies’.⁴² Kirsch’s insights can be applied to other post-1603 plays as well.

Indeed, in recent years, ‘Shakespeare’s debt’ has again become a critical focal point, especially in Anglo-American scholarship.⁴³ There were research seminars on Montaigne and Shakespeare both at the International Shakespeare World Congress in Valencia, Spain, in 2001 and at the Shakespeare Association of America’s Annual Meeting in Bermuda in 2005, as well as a major conference on ‘Shakespeare et Montaigne: Vers un Nouvel Humanisme’ in France in 2003. Most recently, the Shakespeare Association of America’s Annual Meeting in New Orleans in 2016 included a research seminar on ‘Shakespeare and Montaigne’.⁴⁴ Hugh Grady has usefully connected the two writers in his *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne* (2002), and Peter Mack’s *Reading and Rhetoric in Shakespeare and Montaigne* appeared in 2010. William Hamlin’s superb *Montaigne’s English Journey* (2013) focuses on the reception of Florio’s Montaigne in Shakespeare’s age, Robert Ellrodt’s *Montaigne and Shakespeare: The Emergence of Modern Self Consciousness* (2015) explores the writers’ shared intellectual terrain, and Warren Boutcher has seen Shakespeare as one of many important students in *The School of Montaigne* (2017).⁴⁵

Scholars interested in the Montaigne–Shakespeare nexus have paid special attention to the way in which both writers look at human

problems and experience from multiple perspectives. This kaleidoscopic exploration of human diversity has been attributed to Shakespeare before. John Keats in the nineteenth century focused on Shakespeare's 'negative capability'.⁴⁶ Jorge Luis Borges in the twentieth asserted Shakespeare's ability to be 'everything and nothing'.⁴⁷ If Montaigne did not influence Shakespeare's perspectivism – and he may have – he certainly shared it. Isaiah Berlin saw Montaigne as one of those thinkers who resisted 'magnetisation by either polar force', urging 'moderation in a disturbed situation' because he was one of those who could 'see, and cannot help seeing, many sides of a case . . . who perceive that a humane cause promoted by means that are too ruthless is in danger of turning into its opposite'.⁴⁸ For it is Montaigne who claimed that 'I would have this worldes-frame to be my Schollers choise-booke: So many strange humours, sundry sects, varying judgements, diverse opinions, different lawes, and fantastical customs teach vs to judge rightly of ours, and instruct our judgement to acknowledge his [ie, its] imperfections and naturall weakenesse, which is no easie an apprentiship' ('Of the Institution and Education of Children [1.25], 75).

I argue, then, that Montaigne – especially in Florio's 1603 translation – was deeply important to both Shakespeare's thinking and the expression of his thought. Indeed, Jonathan Bate has recently claimed that 'it was this [Montaigne's] book, perhaps above all others, that shaped the mind of Shakespeare in the second half of his career'.⁴⁹

Montaigne and Shakespeare shared an interest in multiplicity: a sense of perspectivism in their epistemology and a sense of a discontinuous self in their ontology. Because Montaigne and Shakespeare have so much in common, critics often end up distinguishing between the two writers on the basis of what Lars Engle has called 'a contrast in sensibility that accompanies the obvious difference in genre between the essay and the play'.⁵⁰ And this is the conclusion of Fred Parker, in his 'Shakespeare's Argument with Montaigne', who argues that there is a significant difference between the private essay and the 'populous' drama:

There is no space in Shakespeare for the privileged viewpoint of the essayist, reflecting on experience, earthing the personal and particular in some large general commonplace or *sententia*. . . . If there is one drama by Shakespeare which could lend itself to being read as an *essai*, it is *The Tempest*, the least populous of all the plays, and the only one where we know for sure that Shakespeare was thinking of Montaigne.⁵¹

Robert Ellrodt seeks to bridge this formal gap by linking Montaigne's essays both to Shakespeare's sonnets but even more to Shakespeare's soliloquies: 'It is through the evolution of the Shakespearean soliloquy that the evolution of subjectivity is best grasped. . . . I think it certain

that Shakespeare's acquaintance with the *Essays* increased his attention to the inner life and the necessity of self knowledge in the period from *Hamlet* to *King Lear*.⁵²

Indeed, as I have suggested earlier, even the generic difference may be over-stated. There is often a shared 'sensibility', and the difference in genre is more than made up for by a similarity in approach to form – O'Brien's 'esthetics of *non-finito*'. Furthermore, what Lawrence Kritzman has identified as 'the corrosive practice of the essay', which 'undermines the legislating power of absolute forms of knowledge since the multiplying of its points of reference confounds us', can be linked to Shakespeare's multivocal stagings. For Shakespeare's plays function similarly to Kritzman's sense of the essay as 'an exercise in approaching a horizon of possibilities'.⁵³ Although Shakespeare's thinking does not always line up with Montaigne's, their interest in alterity – other ways of being, knowing, writing – more often than not connects the two writers.

* * *

Pursuing these threads, I will, in the chapter that follows this Introduction, explore the two authors' relationship to scepticism and knowing on the one hand and to selfhood and being on the other. Chapters 2 to 5 then provide four case studies linking specific essays of Montaigne to specific post-1603 plays of Shakespeare, exploring ideas and connections that can be missed if the focus is merely on verbal echoes.

Chapter 2, the first case study, will pair 'Of Diverting and Diversion' (3.4) and *Hamlet*. *Hamlet* is a crucial text here both because it is, verbally and conceptually, the most Montaignian of Shakespeare's plays and because it is arguably too early to be included in the book. I will address the problem of the dates of the various versions – and especially the differences between the First Quarto (Q1) and the Second Quarto (Q2) – of *Hamlet* in this chapter. My central argument, after an exploration of the multiple versions of Shakespeare's play and of the Montaignian nature of the post-Q1 *Hamlet*, is that Shakespeare essays Montaigne's ambivalence towards diversions. At times Montaigne sees them as essential, even beautiful, and at other times highly misleading, illusory, and escapist. Shakespeare explores diversions through Hamlet's meditations, especially those on mourning and theatricality in the first two acts.⁵⁴

Chapter 3 focuses on both authors' examination of the blended and hybrid nature of the world and compares 'We Taste Nothing Purely' (2.20) with Shakespeare's notoriously mixed, 'impure' problem plays, *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well*. Exploring play-worlds that are 'mingled yarns' of 'good and ill together', these plays blend comedy and tragedy as well; indeed, they seem to be dramatic elaborations on the opening sentence of Montaigne's essay: 'The weakness

of our condition causeth that things in their natural simplicity and purity cannot fall into our use. The elements we enjoy are altered, metals likewise, yea gold must be empared with some other stuff to make it fit for our service' (56; 100).

In Chapter 4 I examine the connection between physical and intellectual creations in 'Of the Affection of Fathers to Their Children' (2.8) and *King Lear*. I will argue that Montaigne is at once more optimistic and more pessimistic about the love between parents and children than Shakespeare in *Lear*: he both argues for the natural bond between parents and their offspring and anatomises the treacheries and missed opportunities for achieving this bond that happen in the real world, beyond ideals. Further, the even greater connection between essay and play is the shared fascination with non-bodily creations. For Montaigne, 'Of the Affection' ultimately argues that 'what we engender by the mind, the fruits of our courage, sufficiency, or spirit, are brought forth by a far more noble part than the corporeal and more our own' (137; 232). For Shakespeare, *King Lear* provides a sustained meditation not only on filial impiety but on mental engenderings: those of 'fools and madmen' (3.4.75), 'noble philosopher[s]' (3.4.160), and the theatre itself.

Chapter 5, my final case study, examines the most famous of the links between Shakespeare and Montaigne. Even Montaigne–Shakespeare sceptics must acknowledge the presence of 'Of the Caniballes' in Gonzalo's speech in 2.1 of *The Tempest*. Scholars have not always agreed on just what work Shakespeare's use of Montaigne is doing, though the dominant view is something akin to Jonathan Bate's sense that Shakespeare has 'reversed Montaigne' – making complex and ironic what Montaigne had portrayed as simple and natural.⁵⁵ But I will argue that, whereas there are undoubtedly differences between Montaigne's cannibal and Shakespeare's Caliban, neither one is entirely 'simple' or 'natural'. I believe that Shakespeare is responding not to the singleness of Montaigne's cannibals but to their doubleness – not to their simplicity but to their complexity. And, like Montaigne's essay, *The Tempest* can be seen to anatomise what David Quint has called 'an ethics of yielding'.⁵⁶ Shakespeare may just be ringing changes on – rather than changing – Montaigne.

I finish the book with an Epilogue that explores what Shakespeare did with three major topics *before* he encountered Florio's translation of Montaigne: the mutability of the self; the multiplicity of truth claims and scepticism in a variety of forms; and the cultural other and outsider. Looking at Shakespeare's thinking about these issues before his encounter with the *Essays* reminds us that Montaigne gave Shakespeare the tools both to explore these ideas more deeply and to make them more prominent in his plays.

Method and Argument

This book seeks to combine the close reading for verbal echoes that characterises Robertson's and Taylor's studies with the exploration of shared ideas, especially of knowledge and the self, that are central to the books of Grady, Mack, Hamlin, and Ellrodt. Without abandoning Eliot's attention to 'words and phrases numerous enough to create a presumption that Shakespeare picked them up from Florio', I keep larger patterns – of thought, form, discourse – in mind.⁵⁷ Will Hamlin, too, has explored this tension between the specificity of Eliot's 'words and phrases' and the more expansive approach of something like Hugh Grady's 'discursive dynamics'.⁵⁸ Hamlin has cautioned – first in 2006 and most recently in his essay on 'Montaigne and Shakespeare' in the *Oxford Handbook of Montaigne* – against relying too much on strict verbal echoes and 'diachronic vectors of intellectual impact', preferring instead 'the weaker thesis of synchronic affinity'.⁵⁹

Although Hamlin's 'weaker thesis' can lead to an impotent free-for-all of associations, this book argues that the greater danger is focusing too intently on verbal parallels and missing larger thematic and structural parallels that even more powerfully suggest the connection between Montaigne and Shakespeare.⁶⁰ In this way, we avoid 'scouring texts for potential source-trajectories that may deceive us into thinking we have found instances of indebtedness when in fact we have compromised our attention to both writers'.⁶¹ Teasing out the Montaignian Shakespeare requires a 'scouring' not just of texts but also of contexts – ideas, patterns, forms.⁶²

What I explore here, rather than a single thematic through-line, are connections and resonances that swirl throughout the essays and plays, especially those concerning the problems of knowing and being. By pairing specific plays with specific Montaignian essays – some of which have rarely or never been paired – I will show how these *Shakespearean* essays, his trials and samplings of Montaigne, are far from arbitrary but instead essential to the meanings of the plays.⁶³ Neither Montaigne nor Shakespeare rests with certainties, and both seem to share Montaigne's notion that 'Were my mind settled, I would not essay but resolve myself. It is still a prentise and a probationer.'⁶⁴ Shakespeare learned from his French collaborator how to essay and not to resolve. He grew to understand that essaying was a way of continuing his apprenticeship and his testing in and of life, a way to alternative possibilities.⁶⁵

Montaigne's essays and Shakespeare's essaying plays share what Theodor Adorno called the essay form's para-doxical, heretical power: 'In opposition to the cliché of the 'understandable', the notion of truth as

a network of causes and effects, the essay insists that a matter be considered, from the very first, in its whole complexity. . . . By transgressing the orthodoxy of thought, something becomes visible in the object which it is orthodoxy's secret purpose to keep invisible.'⁶⁶ As Montaigne claimed, 'Some writers there are, whose ende is but to relate the events. Mine, if I could attaine to it, should be to declare, what may come to passe . . .'⁶⁷ This focus on possibility, multiple selves, brave new worlds – what has not yet been but might still be – is at the heart of Montaigne's and Shakespeare's essays.⁶⁸

Notes

1. For the Jacobean Shakespeare, see among others Longworth de Chamb-run, *Giovanni Florio*; E. K. Chambers, *Shakespeare: A Survey*; John Dover Wilson, *The Essential Shakespeare: A Biographical Adventure*; Sisson, 'The Mythical Sorrows of Shakespeare'; R.W. Chambers, *Man's Unconquerable Mind*; and F. W. Wilson, *Elizabethan and Jacobean*. For Shakespeare and judicial rhetoric, see Skinner, *Forensic Shakespeare*. For the plays' being different as a result of Shakespeare's acting company and of Shakespeare's performances at court, see, respectively, Van Es, *Shakespeare in Company*, and Dutton, *Shakespeare, Court Dramatist*, esp. 267–90. Exploring Shakespeare's post-1603 connections in London – based on his relationship with his French Protestant landlords and their acquaintances – Charles Nicholl has brilliantly examined *The Lodger Shakespeare*.
2. See *Shakespeare's Montaigne*, ed. Greenblatt and Platt.
3. O'Brien, 'Montaigne and Antiquity', 69. Writing about Shakespeare's sonnets, Colin Burrow – in his 'Why Shakespeare is Not Michelangelo' – has called Shakespeare's approach to art an 'aesthetic of mobility: that beauty lies in change rather than chiselling' (20). On Shakespeare's form of possibility, see Palfrey, *Shakespeare's Possible Worlds*: 'Perhaps three things, all inevitably interdependent, most characterise Shakespearean form. First, the instinct to split and double all phenomena, such that everything is shadowed by alternatives it cannot escape; second, a feeling of the potentiality for life, and for the release of or into emotion, in *all* things, animate and inanimate, including instruments of his craft, objects used in it, and abstractions; third, a knowledge that every surface hides dimensions, and can be tented like a wound, or magnified into multiplicity, and that this spatial variety speaks equally of temporal extension, backward and forward in history, such that all phenomena contain their sources, their struggles, and their possible futures. We seem never to be given something – word, concept, emotion, institution – without being asked to imagine it otherwise, inside out, upside down, conjoined' (33).
4. See 'Essayer', in Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues*. In his entry on '*Essai (genre)*' in the *Dictionnaire de Michel de Montaigne*,

ed. Desan, Philippe Desan notes that 'Une des premières définitions du mot <<essai>> fut donnée par La Croix du Maine dans sa *Bibliothèque française* (1584): <<ce titre ou inscription est fort modeste, car si on veut prendre ce mot d'*Essais*, pour coup d'Essai, ou apprentissage, cela est fort humble et rabaissé . . .>>. Il est en effet assez courant à cette époque de considérer la première publication d'un auteur un coup d'essai. . . L'expression <<coup d'essai>> est fréquente à la Renaissance' (341). Indeed, Cotgrave is very helpful here, too: 'Coup d'essay: The Maister-peece of a young workeman, or of one that's but newly come of his yeares; a beginning, entrance, onset, attempt; a flourish, or preamble, whereby a tast of a thing is giuen, or taken' (n.p.). So *coup d'essay* is a first attempt at a work – whether a book or something else made by a 'young workeman' – but it also possesses the humility that is associated with 'essay' generally: From its origins, it is an extremely modest ('fort modeste . . . fort humble') and self-diminishing ('rabaissé') form. That Shakespeare essays Montaigne's *Essais* – both of them tasting but neither of them hoping to master – is significant.

5. Nietzsche, 'Richard Wagner in Bayreuth', 207.
6. For recent surveys of the Montaigne–Shakespeare connection, see Mack, 'Montaigne and Shakespeare'; Burrow, 'Montaignian Moments'; and Hamlin, 'Montaigne and Shakespeare'. And I have been chastened by Warren Boutcher's questions, in his 'Montaigne in England and America', about just what 'influence' means when it comes to Montaigne's effect on early modern England and beyond: 'Is Montaigne's reception to be studied as "influence" on the part of the author or as "appropriation" on the part of readers? Is it still a matter of the afterlife, "fortunes", or posterity of the original text, which is more or less faithfully and richly interpreted by English readers and writers? Or is it an active process whose meaning and outcomes are shaped primarily by the agents and circumstances of reception?' (306). My sense of 'influence' is close to that of Tetsuo Anzai, in his *Shakespeare and Montaigne Reconsidered*: 'an influence [is] one that can be pointed out on the deeper, structural level of a work . . . perhaps a more appropriate term would be "resonance": that is, an intellectual response to the received impact, reinforced by vibration or reflection. To put it another way, we may well call it an actualization of inherent potentiality' (4–5).
7. Capell, *Notes and Various Readings to Shakespeare*, volume II, part IV, p. 63. There has been confusion about exactly when Capell's note on *The Tempest* and Montaigne's 'Of the Caniballes' originally appeared. Most scholars accept 1780 as the date, largely on the evidence put forward by George Coffin Taylor, 'The Date of Edward Capell's *Notes and Various Readings to Shakespeare, Volume II*'.
8. The phrase 'debt to Montaigne' alludes to the still-important book of George Coffin Taylor, *Shakspeare's Debt to Montaigne*. Taylor consistently spells 'Shakespeare' as 'Shakspeare'.
9. See Lesser, *Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Publication*.

10. Samuel Daniel, 'To my deere friend M. Iohn Florio, concerning *his translation of Montaigne*', in *The Essayes or Morall, Politike and Millitarie Discourses* (1603), sig. ¶r–v.
11. See Webster, *The White Devil*, ed. Robinson, *passim*.
12. See Hamlin, *Tragedy and Scepticism in Shakespeare's England*: 'Certainly Jonson and Marston were reading Montaigne shortly after Florio's translation appeared: Jonson owned a copy of the book, and Marston drew on it heavily as he composed *The Dutch Courtesan*' (72–3). For the definitive work on the subject, see Hamlin's *Montaigne's English Journey*.
13. Capell, *Notes and Various Readings to Shakespeare*, volume II, part IV, p. 63.
14. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, 5.1.15, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, second edition. Unless otherwise noted, all further citations from the plays of Shakespeare are to this edition and are annotated within the text.
15. *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, ed. Malone, vol. 1, part 2, p. 38.
16. Montaigne, 'Of Cannibals' (1.30/31), in *Shakespeare's Montaigne*. Where available, quotations from Florio's Montaigne will come from this edition; citations will be included in the text and will list, first, this edition's page number and, second, the page number of the 1603 *Essayes* (61; 102).
17. Ellrodt, 'Self-Consciousness in Montaigne and Shakespeare', 37n3.
18. Madden, 'Observations on an Autograph of Shakspeare, and the orthography of his Name', 116. Capell's linking of Shakespeare to Montaigne is known enough that Madden wants to dispel doubt that this is a post-1780 forgery: 'How or when this gentlemen [the father of the current owner, Reverend Edward Pattenon] first became possessed of it, is not known; but it is very certain that previous to the year 1780, Mr. Pattenon used to exhibit the volume to his friends as a curiosity, *on account of the autograph*' (114–15).
19. [Sterling], 'Art. IV', A review of 'Observations on an Autograph . . .', 321. See Ellrodt, 'Self-Consciousness in Montaigne and Shakespeare', esp. 38n2, for a history of the dispute over the Shakespeare autograph.
20. Chappuit, 'Avant-Propos', *Shakespeare et Montaigne*, ed. Maguin, 4.
21. Hugh Grady helpfully points out that the more intense and sustained interest of French and German scholars is not surprising because of 'the tendency of traditional French scholarship . . . to define the "system" of thinking within the works of major authors' and 'the Hegelian interest in German scholarship, with its traditions of cultural history and consequent attention to large scale cultural developments'. See his 'Afterword', 173.
22. *Journal des Débats*, 7 November 1846; repr. in his *L'Angleterre au seizième siècle* (1879), 136.
23. See Elze, *Essays on Shakespeare and Life of Shakespeare*; Stedefeld, *Hamlet*; and Feis, *Shakspeare and Montaigne*.
24. Feis, 43, 90.
25. Hooker, 'The Relation of Shakespeare to Montaigne', and Robertson, *Montaigne and Shakespeare*. An earlier version of Robertson's book appeared as *Montaigne and Shakspeare* in 1897.

26. Robertson, *Montaigne and Shakespeare*, 139 and 120.
27. Robertson, *Montaigne and Shakespeare*, 219. F. O. Matthiessen – drawing on Taylor's research and tables of words used by Shakespeare only after 1603 – tells a similar story with a different explanation: 'Shakespeare used these new words and phrases very often immediately after 1603, and then there is a gradual tapering off until *The Tempest*, where they again increase. This fact suggests an eager first reading that caused many phrases to stay half consciously in Shakespeare's memory for a period of years, and then a later return to the book which resulted in the passage on the ideal commonwealth' (*Translation*, 165).
28. Robertson, *Montaigne and Shakespeare*, 285. In her superb *John Florio*, Frances Yates claimed that, for Robertson, Shakespeare's debt to Montaigne 'seriously diminished his [Shakespeare's] stature' (243). This claim seems overstated, for Robertson concludes his essay on 'The Originality of Shakespeare' with a rather optimistic observation: 'It is none the less a stimulating and reconciling thought that the supremacy of the work of our greatest man of letters is largely the outcome of his untroubled willingness to adopt other men's plans and performance, wherever he could turn them to good account, he having the while no thought of becoming immortal by such means' (290–1).
29. Collins, *Studies in Shakespeare*, 280. Nonetheless, Collins makes insightful comparisons between the two writers: 'In each a subtle and restless wit delighting in nice distinctions, in paradox, in casuistry, sought naturally the themes which would call it into play, and afford it scope. To each, the riddles of life, the relation of reason to truth, of free will to necessity, of humanity to the divine, of fancy to fact, had the deepest attraction[;] and both accepted with perfect equanimity, for both were humorists, the absolute insolubility of the problems which fascinated them. In both there was a certain timidity of temper. Both abhorred dogmatism, and both, to all appearance, delighting in chafing its upholders. Their religious opinions and their attitude towards orthodoxy are exactly identical. Both are, practically, theistical agnostics, but both reverence, and for the same formal reasons, Christianity, the one as embodied in Roman Catholicism, the other as embodied in Protestantism' (295–6). When he tries to return to his more negative thesis, both his logic and his prose break down: 'The true nature of Shakespeare's indebtedness to Montaigne may be fairly estimated if we say what, we believe, may be said with truth, that had the Essays never appeared[,] there is nothing to warrant the assumption that what he has in common with Montaigne would not have been equally conspicuous' (296). It is hard to know how conspicuous 'what [Shakespeare] had in common with Montaigne' would be 'had the Essays never appeared'.
30. Villey, 'Montaigne et Shakespeare', in *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare*, 418. See also his 'Montaigne et les poètes dramatiques anglais du tempe de Shakespeare'.
31. Taylor, *Shakspeare's Debt*, 5.
32. Taylor, *Shakspeare's Debt*, 7–8.

33. T. S. Eliot, 'Shakespeare and Montaigne', 895.
34. Eliot, 'Shakespeare and Montaigne', 895. Montaigne as a 'stimulant' for Shakespeare's writing could echo the language of Robertson, who had claimed 'Montaigne is for Shakespeare the source of the stimulus' (*Montaigne and Shakespeare*, 87). Eliot had favourably reviewed Robertson's *The Problem of 'Hamlet'* in 1919, the first time Eliot famously declared Shakespeare's play an 'artistic failure' (See 'Hamlet and His Problems', 941.) Eliot's interest in Shakespeare's connection to Montaigne is evident here as well: 'We need a great many facts in his biography; and we should like to know whether, and when, and after or at the same time as what personal experience, he read Montaigne, II. xii., 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond'. We should have, finally, to know something which is by hypothesis unknowable, for we assume it to be an experience which, in the manner indicated, exceeded the facts. We should have to understand things which Shakespeare did not understand himself' (941). The review was expanded and published in *The Sacred Wood*.
35. Harmon, 'How Great was Shakespeare's Debt to Montaigne?' For more early scepticism towards Taylor's argument, see Frederic Page, 'Shakespeare and Florio'. In a still-valuable book published in German a few years after Harmon's essay, Hugo Friedrich in his *Montaigne* (1949) makes points about Montaigne that can be used to link the French author to Shakespeare (see Chapter 1 below). Nonetheless, he is a 'nexus skeptic': 'Contrary to prevailing opinion among the English, German, and French scholars of English, I am not convinced that this influence amounted to much. The only thing solidly established is that Shakespeare read the Florio translation. But the parallels of the ideal kind cited in the research in the main concerns commonplace things for which Montaigne only played the vehicle, or things that could also have come to Shakespeare from other sources' (405–6n292).
36. Harmon, 1007. See Taylor's spirited reply to Harmon in his 'Montaigne–Shakespeare and the Deadly Parallel': 'Practically every idea in the Renaissance is a commonplace. Literary *expressions* of the ideas, poetical and prose *patterns*, *architectonics*, are another matter' (336). Although a confirmed 'conservative' (262) in the Montaigne–Shakespeare source debate, Eleanor Prosser, in her 'Shakespeare, Montaigne, and the Rarer Action', added arguably only the second certain parallel of Florio's Montaigne in the work of Shakespeare: the links between Prospero's speech to Ariel on the 'rarer action' of virtue over vengeance in Act V of *The Tempest* (5.1.25–28) and Montaigne's 'Of Crueltie' (2.11). Agreeing with Harmon that 'coincidences in diction as well as in idea' must be 'unmistakable', Prosser argues persuasively for this connection as 'one more parallel passage that passes Miss Harmon's test' (261).
37. A classic example of her misreading involves Hamlet's bitter speech about the 'quintessence of dust', which arguably has its source in 2.12:

Ham. . . .this goodly frame the earth seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestic roof fretted with golden fire,

why, it appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals – and yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?’ (2.2.289–98)

Compare Montaigne, trans. Florio: ‘Who hath perswaded him, that this admirable mooving of heavens-vaults; that the eternal light of these lampes so fiercely rowling over his head; that the horror-moving and continuall motion of the infinite vaste Ocean, were established, and continue so manie ages for his commoditie and service? Is it possible to imagine any thing so ridiculous, as this miserable and wretched creature, which is not so much as maister of himselfe, exposed and subject to offences of all things, and yet dareth call himselfe Maister and Emperour of this Vniverse?’ (*Essayes*, II.12, 258).

Although Harmon dismisses the link as a commonplace description of ‘the beauty and order of the universe as contemplated by the mind of man’ (995), it is the shared cynical turn *against* ‘the beauty and order of the universe’ and the critique of ‘this miserable and wretched creature’, ‘this quintessence of dust’, that makes the connection compelling. See Chapter 2 below.

38. Hodgen, ‘Montaigne and Shakespeare Again’.
39. Hodgen, ‘Montaigne and Shakespeare Again’, 42.
40. Hodgen, ‘Montaigne and Shakespeare Again’, 39. In a very helpful summary of the early decades of this debate, Hugh Grady insightfully notes that ‘positivist skepticism over evidentiary questions produced a scholarly consensus that suspicions of a shared skeptical philosophy between Montaigne and Shakespeare were not viable professional discourse’ (‘Afterword’, 171).
41. See also Jourdan, *The Sparrow and the Flea*: ‘What distinguishes Shakespeare and Montaigne from many if not most of their contemporaries and elevates them to preeminence among humanists of all time is their passion for probing the truth and practicality of these *loci communes*. If Shakespeare read Montaigne, the evidence should not be that both used commonplaces but the direction and significance of their departure from them’ (16).
42. Kirsch, ‘Virtue, Vice, and Compassion in Montaigne and *The Tempest*’, 338.
43. Grady attributes the change in Anglo-American interest in the ‘linkage’ to a shift away from the ‘empiricist tradition, with its corrosive suspicions of generalizations and rational systematizing . . . that tended to preclude investigation of anything like a systematic Shakespearean “philosophy” or “system of thought”’. Because of ‘the influence of the various forms of literary theory at work within English studies for the last twenty years or more . . . it is possible to venture non-empirical generalizations and hypotheses that also avoid the Hegelian and Cartesian assumptions which often accompanied such hypotheses in German and French literary studies respectively and which drew the fire of Anglo-American empiricists accordingly’ (‘Afterword’, 173).

44. Papers from the 2001 and 2005 seminars appear in Bradshaw and Bishop (eds), *The Shakespearean International Yearbook* 6; Robert Ellrodt's paper from the 2001 seminar, 'Self-Consistency in Montaigne and Shakespeare', can be found in Clayton, Brock, and Forés (eds), *Shakespeare and the Mediterranean*. The papers from the 2003 conference are collected in Maguin (ed.), *Shakespeare et Montaigne*. Some of the papers from the 2016 SAA seminar appear in Engle, Gray, and Hamlin (eds), *Shakespeare and Montaigne*.
45. Grady, *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne*; Mack, *Reading and Rhetoric in Shakespeare and Montaigne*; Hamlin, *Montaigne's English Journey*; Ellrodt, *Montaigne and Shakespeare*; Boutcher, *The School of Montaigne: Volume II, The Reader-Writer*, 189–271. See also Jourdan's relatively early – and very hard to find – *The Sparrow and the Flea*, esp. 1–25.
46. Letter from John Keats to George and Tom Keats, 21 December 1817, in *The Letters of John Keats* 1:193–4. See also Hazlitt, *Table Talk*, Essay 5, 'On Genius and Common Sense' (1821): 'His genius consisted in the faculty of transforming himself at will into whatever he chose; his originality was the power of seeing every object from the exact point of view in which others would see it. He was the Proteus of the human intellect' (*The Collected Works of William Hazlitt*, 6: 42).
47. Borges, 'Everything and Nothing', in *Labyrinths*, 248–50.
48. Berlin, 'Fathers and Children', in *Russian Thinkers*, 297.
49. Bate, 'Montaigne and Shakespeare'.
50. Engle, 'Sovereign Cruelty in Montaigne and *King Lear*', 134.
51. Parker, 'Shakespeare's Argument with Montaigne', 18.
52. Ellrodt, *Montaigne and Shakespeare*, 73; 94. See also Levin, *The Question of Hamlet*: 'in retrospection, his [Shakespeare's] mentor is Montaigne; the soliloquies are like the *Essays* in balancing arguments with counter-arguments, in pursuing wayward ideas and unmasking stubborn illusions' (71), and Mack, *Reading and Rhetoric*: 'The soliloquy depicts thought which moves by statement, response and reflection, just as Montaigne's *Essais* do. Shakespeare portrays in Claudius's soliloquy something of the movement and changeability of the human mind, which Montaigne asserts as a general principle on the basis of collecting different examples and testing their implications against his introspection' (19).
53. Kritzman, *The Fabulous Imagination*, 5, 4.
54. Because of their respective approaches to the topic of succession (and *not* because of their respective engagements with Montaigne), Richard Dutton, in his *Shakespeare, Court Dramatist*, sees Q1 as an Elizabethan play and Q2 as a Jacobean one: 'Q2 (and indeed F) are both Jacobean texts, revised when the outcome of the succession was a *fait accompli* and it was possible to review events with some equanimity, whereas Q1 is an Elizabethan play, as fraught with anxieties about regime change as *Gorbuduc* or *King Leir*' (238–9).
55. Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid*, 256.

56. Quint, *Montaigne and the Quality of Mercy*, 99.
57. Eliot, 'Shakespeare and Montaigne', 895. Julia Kristeva's 'notion of *intertextuality*', developed in an essay on Bakhtin's work on dialogism and the carnivalesque, is also relevant here: 'any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another'. See her 'Word, Dialogue, and Novel' (1966/1969), in *Desire in Language*, 66. Montaigne's take on intertextuality comes in his 'Of the Institution and Education of Children' (1.26, 1.25 in Florio): 'The bees do heere and there sucke this, and cull that flower, but afterward they produce the hony, which is peculiarly their owne, then is it no more Thyme or Marjoram. So of peeces borrowed of others, he may lawfully alter, transforme, and confound them, to shape out of them a perfect peece of worke, altogether his owne' (71). For Montaigne and his source texts, so for Shakespeare and his, including Montaigne: Shakespeare can be seen to – *pace* Greene and Chettle – 'lawfully alter, transforme, and confound' Montaigne's essays because he ultimately 'shape[s] out of them a perfect peece of worke, altogether his owne'. See also Hartle, *Michel de Montaigne*, 75. On this process at work in Shakespeare's transforming Florio transforming Montaigne, see Boutcher, 'Butchering the Cannibals', in *Montaigne in Transit*, esp. 121. This altering, transforming, and confounding is part of what I am calling Shakespearean *essaying*.
58. Grady, *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne*, 29. See also de Gooyer, "Their Senses I'll Restore": '... admittedly, almost any other type of proposed connection other than verbal borrowing or generic development will probably remain (merely) annotative, or be so loose as to become plainly speculative. ... [C]onnections other than verifiable borrowings are difficult to confirm, and when suggested they are always in danger of falling prey to charges of vagueness, or relying on some misty notion of *zeitgeist* or some thinly attenuated claim that cultural negotiations are (secretly) at work. Against such criticism there is little to be said, except that if we relate the two works in order to complicate or deepen our sense of the play, or as a way to nudge us out of the rut of the familiar transcendental and revisionist readings, we have done the play some service' (513).
59. See Hamlin, 'Montaigne and Shakespeare', 342. Earlier versions of his argument appear in 'The Shakespeare–Montaigne–Sextus Nexus', 29, and in *Montaigne's English Journey*, 110.
60. See, most recently, Burrow, 'Montaignian Moments', who argues persuasively for Shakespeare's 'reactive reading of discursive texts' based on a 'range of reactions which a discursive text might prompt – disagreement, the recognition of an underlying logical structure, chance overlaps with personal concerns, the provision of commonplaces or *sententiae*, or a provocation to thinking. ... Shakespeare did not just read Montaigne from at least 1603, but reacted to him as Montaigne reacted to his own reading, with the kind of resistant eclecticism that comes of treating a book as akin to a person with whom you might argue' (248–9). For Burrow,

- ‘Montaignian moments . . . punctuate the action in scenes in which characters reflect, joke, philosophize, explore the awkward misrelation between general principle and personal experience, and open out alternative perspectives on the main action’ (250). See also Hamlin, ‘The Shakespeare–Montaigne–Sextus Nexus’: ‘Neither Montaigne nor Shakespeare display much interest in systematic thinking; their most fundamental commonality may indeed be a blithe disregard for contradiction, a consuming and brilliant attention to the urgencies of the moment rather than to worries about overall intellectual cohesion. Vigorously pursuing the conversation is of paramount interest to both’ (32).
61. Hamlin, ‘Montaigne and Shakespeare’, 342. See Hugh Grady’s warning against getting ‘bogged down in the technicalities of source-hunting and evidence’ (‘Afterword’, 171). See also Hamlin’s caution, in his ‘The Shakespeare–Montaigne–Sextus Nexus’, against leaning too hard on *influence* at all: ‘[B]ecause we cannot assume that our own eclectisms correspond to those of readers four centuries ago, we are on safer ground if we concentrate on large-scale patterns and tendencies in the *Essays*, all the while remaining cautious about what “influence” might amount to for any specific early modern reader’ (31). Serena Jourdan, in her *The Sparrow and the Flea*, also wished to look at the two writers while suspending the notion of influence: ‘The aim of this study is to . . . determine whether a close, binary reading of Shakespeare and Montaigne without concern for influence and without necessity therefore to respect or speculate about chronologies can be valuably instructive’ (v).
 62. I have little doubt that using a method combining plagiarism software, such as WCopyfind, and the searchable database of Early English Books Online (EEBO) – both brilliantly deployed by Dennis McCarthy and June Schlueter in their ‘*A Brief Discourse of Rebellion and Rebels*’ – would yield data that would build on Taylor’s pioneering work, adding examples and ‘confirm[ing] rarity’ in a way that pre-digitised texts did not allow Taylor to do (12). I hope that work will be done. As I have said above, however, my goal is not only to rely on verbal echoes but also to move beyond them in an attempt to uncover other, deeper affinities between Montaigne and Shakespeare.
 63. Colin Burrow, in his ‘Montaignian Moments’, underscores an important problem that I am trying to address here: ‘literary criticism has historically not been well equipped with a vocabulary or a method for writing about relationships between two authors where thinking, rather than direct verbal borrowing, might be involved’ (240). See also Frampton, “‘To Be, or Not to Be’: *Hamlet* Q1, Q2 and Montaigne’, who asks, ‘what are we finally to make of Shakespeare’s “borrowings”? Are they purloining, graftings, rewritings?’ (110).
 64. Montaigne, ‘Of Repenting’ (3.2), 196; 483. The French clearly aligns essaying with learning and trying: ‘Si mon ame pouvoit prendre pied, je m’essaierois pas, je resoudrois: elle est tousjours en apprentissage, et en

- espreuve. See *Les Essais*, ed. Balsamo, et al., 845. For 'apprentissage', Cotgrave has 'A Prentiship'; for 'espreuve', clearly a synonym for 'essay', he gives us 'A prooffe, tryall, experiment, essay, attempt'. This passage, Eric Auerbach claims in *Mimesis*, 'explains the meaning of the title *Essais*, which might fittingly though not very gracefully be rendered as "Tests upon One's Self" or "Self-Try-Outs"' (292).
65. I argue that both writers are questing to find what a Montaigne scholar has recently called 'the possibility of their being otherwise' and a Shakespeare scholar has recently deemed 'dispatches from alternative futures'. See Guild, *Unsettling Montaigne*, 11, and Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare's Universality*, 25. For Montaigne and possibility, see Kritzman, *The Fabulous Imagination*: 'Montaigne . . . implies that the imagination can produce fantasies that can eventually be encountered in the world. . . . The exemplarity of the Montaignian imagination teaches us that we can transcend the dominant positivism of our current age by seeing things otherwise' (5, 26). For Shakespeare and possibility, see a related point by Simon Palfrey: 'His work is permissive, unjealous, open. Above all, his writing is generous, in the invitations and the trust that it affords to both actors and attenders; a trust that necessarily extends to his own creations, that they will remain open, and partially yielding, when the actors and attenders return, as they must' (41). Interestingly, for Aristotle, 'the subjects of our deliberation [in rhetoric] are such as seem to present us with alternative possibilities' (*Rhetoric* 1357a). See Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Barnes, 2: 2157.
66. Adorno, 'The Essay as Form', 162–3. He goes on to claim that '[the essay] counteracts that hardened primitiveness that always allies itself with reason's current form. Whereas science treats the difficulties and complexities of an antagonistic and monadologically split reality according to the expectation of this society by reducing them to simplifying models and then belatedly differentiates them with fabricated material, the essay shakes off the illusion of a simple, basically logical world that so perfectly suits the defense of the status quo. . . . Therefore the law of the innermost form of the essay is heresy' (171). See also Zalloua, 'Essaying Trouble': 'Montaigne's essaying aims at devalorizing his authority as a "sujet supposé savoir" by making his readers (co)responsible for the interpretive labor. . . . Essaying keeps our eyes focused on vulnerability as both an ontological category and a hermeneutic challenge, as a remainder and reminder of what lies beyond mastery, beyond the control of philosophy's sovereign subject, and as an opportunity to trouble closure, to complicate, scrutinize, and multiple [sic] its meanings' (172).
67. Michel de Montaigne, 'Of the Force of Imagination' (1.20/1.21), *The Essayes*, trans. Florio, 45. Drawing on this Montaignian key-text as well as many others, Ann Hartle, in her *Michel de Montaigne*, has claimed that Montaigne's 'skeptical moment' is 'a moment of openness to the possible rather than a suspension of judgment', as it would be in ancient,

Pyrrhonian scepticism. 'Montaigne incorporates the skeptical moment into the dialectical movement of his thought: the moment of openness to the possible allows him to find the strange in the familiar' (3).

68. David Carroll Simon, in his *Light without Heat*, has recently identified a Montaignian approach that, I argue, would resonate with Shakespeare: 'Montaigne's critique falls not on any particular source of knowledge but rather on an attitude of zealous adherence – to precedence, doctrine, cause, or any chosen object of attention. Montaigne looks to tradition all the time, but without the premise that it delivers a verdict. He suspends the assumption that ancient sources have more to tell us than we can tell ourselves, even about the very messages he calls on them to transmit' (56). For Hugh Grady, in his 'Afterword', Shakespeare and Montaigne share 'an abhorrence of the reification of absolutizing, instrumental rationality; insight into the resistance of the world's complexities to the schemas of subjects-who-are-supposed-to-know; a keen sense of the limitations and delusions of desire-driven alienated subjectivity and yet an insistence on feeling, interiority, and the subjective as aspects of adequate knowledge' (179). See also Rossiter: Crucial to Shakespeare's thinking 'was the scepticism of Montaigne, which by probing into the unsteadiness and varying-ness of purely human standards, set men's minds to the discovery of what in this mutable world *was* enduring and stable and the same from generation to generation' (*Angel with Horns*, 187).